



PRRC emerging trends

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Religion Seen Losing Influence On American Life

PRINCETON, N.J. — Half of Americans (49%) now say religion is losing its influence on American life, exceeding the proportion who say that religion is gaining in influence (33%) or staying the same (9%). Just three years ago, 48% said "gaining," while 39% said losing, and 7% "staying the same."

The question and national findings for 1989:

At the present time, do you think religion as a whole is increasing its influence on American life or losing its influence?

Influence of Religion

	1989
Increasing	33%
Losing	49
Staying the same (Volunteered)	9
No opinion	9
	100%

When this index was started in 1957, 69% said religion was gaining influence on American life while far fewer, 14%, said losing. Following is the long-term trend, with the proportions saying "the same" or "no opinion" excluded:

	Increasing	Losing
	%	%
1989	33	49
1988	36	49
1986	48	39
1985	49	39
1984	42	39
1983	44	42
1981	38	46
1980	35	46
1978	37	48
1977	36	45
1976	44	45
1975	39	51
1974	31	56
1970	14	75
1969	14	70
1968	18	67
1967	23	57
1965	33	45
1962	45	31
1957	69	14

The latest results are based on 1,007 telephone interviews with adults, 18 and older, conducted April 10-16, 1989.

Parents Disturbed by TV Content; Most See Growth in Problem

Six in 10 parents who watch television with their children at least occasionally feel uncomfortable about the content of the programs they see. Sex and violence are the principal causes of distress, which parents react to by switching channels or turning off their sets.

A recent Gallup study of TV viewing also found a majority of parents feeling objectionable programming is more prevalent now than it was a year ago.

The sensitive issue of program content was given new prominence last month when a front-page article in the New York Times described a Michigan housewife's campaign to curb sex and violence on TV. Her letters of complaint reportedly convinced some major advertisers to remove their commercials from a popular TV show because of its sexually-oriented content.

Parents watch an average of 7.5 TV shows each week with their children under 18, the survey reveals. The incidence of parent-child viewing is higher among women (7.9 programs) than men (6.9). Heavier viewing also is reported by parents whose formal education ended at the high school level (9.1), those with annual family incomes of less than \$25,000 (9.5), and parents of school-age children (8.0).

About six parents in 10 (58%) either frequently (25%) or occasionally (33%) feel uncomfortable about the contents of the TV programs they watch with their children. Only one in six (17%) is never troubled while 25% seldom are.

Discomfort over program content tends to be slightly higher among heavier viewers; women, the less-educated and less-affluent, and parents of 6-to-17-year-old children.

Parents who sometimes feel uncomfortable about the shows they watch with their children most often object to sexually explicit or suggestive episodes (46%), violence (37%), and obscene language or swearing (17%).

Their most common reactions to subject matter they consider objectionable are turning to a different program or channel (46%), turning the set off (24%), or telling their children what should have been said or done (11%). Other responses cited are refusing to allow their children

to watch the program in the future (5%) and expressing their disapproval (4%).

Problem Seen Growing

More than half of parents who are uneasy about the TV programs they watch with their children think these occurrences are either much more frequent (17%) or somewhat more frequent (38%) than a year ago; 14% feel they are about the same. Only three in 10 believe there now is somewhat less (21%) or much less (9%) objectionable programming.

Following are the questions and key findings:

On the average, about how many television programs do you watch with your children each week?"

TV Viewing with Children

	Average programs per week
NATIONWIDE	7.5
Men	6.9
Women	7.9
18-29 years	7.6
30 & older	7.3
Attended college	5.5
No college	9.1
\$25,000 & over	6.8
Under \$25,000	9.5
Children's Age:	
Under 6	7.1
6-12	7.9
13-17	8.0

Parents who watch with their children (83% of parents with children under 18 living at home) were asked:

About how often would you say you feel uncomfortable about something in a television program that you are watching with your children? Would you say you frequently, occasionally, seldom or never feel uncomfortable?

Frequency of Discomfort Caused by TV

Frequently	25%
Occasionally	33
Seldom	25
Never	17
	100%

What would you say is most likely to make you feel uncomfortable?

Causes of Discomfort

Sex	46%
Violence	37
Bad language	17
Other	6
Not sure	2
	*108%

If you feel uncomfortable about something on a television program you are watching with your children, what, if anything, do you usually do about it?

Actions Taken

Switch channel, program	46%
Turn TV off	24
Explain to children	11
Ban future viewing	5
Express disapproval	4
Other	6
Nothing, not sure	8
	*104%

*Adds to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

Compared to one year ago, how frequently would you say you feel uncomfortable with the television programs you watch with your children?

Trend in Discomfort Caused by TV Content

Much more frequently	17%
Somewhat more frequently	38
About the same	14
Somewhat less frequently	21
Much less frequently	9
Not sure	1
	100%

The findings are based on telephone interviews with 424 parents of children under 18, out of a total sample of 1008 adults, 18 and older. The survey was conducted nationwide between Nov. 14 and Dec. 4, 1988 for The CBN Family Channel by The Gallup Organization. For results based on the subsample of parents, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling error and other random effects could be 5 percentage points in either direction.

In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls. *This report conforms to the standards of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.*

PRRC To Offer Presentation Based On Results of Unchurched American Study

Princeton, N.J. — Stating that the results of the recently completed "Unchurched American" survey needed to have widespread availability to clergy and other church workers, George Gallup, Jr., Executive Director of the Princeton Religion Research Center, announced that the PRRC will offer consultation that will help individual churches and other religious organizations make practical use of the survey findings.

The presentation entitled, "Reaching the Unchurched American," includes an overview of the study, comparisons between the 1988 and 1978 surveys, and possible steps to reach the unchurched.

For more information on how you can schedule a presentation for your church, denomination, or religious organization, please write:

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Little Change Found In Relative Strength Of Major Faiths In U.S.

The 1988 Gallup audit of religious preference shows little change in the relative strength of major faiths in the United States. The 1988 series of surveys, based on interviews with 15,460 adults (18 and older) shows 56% giving their religious preference as Protestant, 28% as Catholic, 2% as Jewish, and 2% indicating their religious preference to be The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons).

Those who say they have no religious preference statistically matches the findings recorded over the last half-decade, but is significantly higher than the 2% recorded in 1967. This annual audit of religious preference (for major faiths) was initiated by The Gallup Poll in 1947.

Here is the question and findings for 1988, compared to those recorded for 1987 (showing findings for the Mormon Church and for Orthodox Churches):

Religious Preferences

	1988	1987
	%	%
Protestant	56	57
Roman Catholic	28	28
Jewish	2	2
Mormon (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)	2	2
Eastern Orthodox Churches	*	*
Other	2	2
None	10	9

*Less than one percent

Here is the four-decade trend. Specific figures for the Mormon and Orthodox Churches are omitted because of insufficient historical data, and are included under the "other" category.

Religious Preferences

— Yearly —

	Protestant	Catholic	Jewish	Other	None
	%	%	%	%	%
1988	56	28	2	4	10
1987	57	28	2	4	9
1986	58	27	2	4	9
1985	57	28	2	4	9
1984	57	28	2	4	9
1983	56	29	2	4	9
1982	57	29	2	4	8
1981	59	28	2	4	7
1980	61	28	2	2	7
1979	59	29	2	2	8
1977-78	60	29	2	1	8
1976	61	27	2	4	6
1975	62	27	2	4	6
1974	60	27	2	5	6

—By 5-year Periods—

	Protestant	Catholic	Jewish	Other	None
	%	%	%	%	%
1972	63	26	2	4	5
1967	67	25	3	3	2
1962	70	23	3	2	2
1957	66	26	3	1	3
1952	67	25	4	1	2
1947	69	20	5	1	6

NOTE: Results for some years do not add to 100% because of rounding.

Dating Is Strongest Peer Pressure Among Teens

Teens may appear carefree as they celebrate the holidays, but they feel pressure from their peers to engage in a wide range of activities in which they may be reluctant to participate, according to a recent Gallup Youth Survey.

In particular, many teens are now reporting a great deal (21 percent) or some (25 percent) pressure to have a boyfriend or girlfriend. By comparison, in 1982, only about one teen in three (34 percent) felt any pressure to have a "steady."

Similarly, 42 percent of the teens now say they are experiencing at least some pressure to have dates. In 1982, only 33 percent felt similar pressures.

In 1985, 45 percent of the teens felt pressure to go to parties. The appeal of the party scene appears to have abated somewhat, with only 14 percent in 1988 saying they feel a great deal of pressure to go to parties, and an additional 25 percent reporting some peer pressure.

The pressure felt by teens to have sexual relations at an early age has been declining somewhat in recent years. In 1982, 31 percent reported they felt they were being pressured to engage in sex. The proportion of teens giving such reports declined slightly in 1985 to 29 percent of all teens, and a further decline is noted in 1988, with only one teen in four (25 percent) feeling pressured to have sex.

The types of socialization pressures can vary according to age. Younger teens (13 to 15) are most likely to feel they are being pressured to have dates (46 percent) or to go to parties (42 percent), while older teens (16 and older) are more likely to feel they are being urged to engage in sex (29 percent).

Currently, 18 percent of the teens feel they are under a great deal of pressure to drink alcohol, and an additional 18 percent say they feel some pressure to do so. This represents only a slight decline since 1982, when 39 percent of the teens said they were under pressure to drink.

A similar pattern is noted for cigarette smoking, with 12 percent now saying they are under great pressure from their peers to smoke, and 11 percent reporting some pres-

sure to use marijuana, however, has dropped sharply in the same period, from 32 percent in 1982 to 24 percent in 1985, and to only 19 percent in 1988. Of those now feeling pressure to use marijuana, 13 percent say there is a great deal of pressure, while 6 percent feel some pressure.

In general, nearly half the teens say they feel pressure from their peers to break rules, with 18 percent reporting a great deal of pressure, and 28 percent some pressure.

Here is how the question was asked:

How much do you feel that you are under pressure from your peers — a great deal, some, hardly any, or not at all — in each of the following activities?

The findings reported today are based on telephone interviews with a representative national cross section of 500 teen-agers, 13 through 17, conducted September 3-30, 1988.

Peer Pressures

	Great deal %	Some %	Hardly any %	None %
To have a boy/girl friend	21	25	21	33
To break rules	13	28	18	35
To drink	18	18	14	49
To have dates	16	26	25	32
To party	14	25	32	28
To smoke marijuana	13	6	15	65
To smoke cigarettes	12	11	15	61
To engage in sexual relations	11	14	18	57
No opinion (1 percent, nationally) omitted.				

Can Religion Answer World Problems?

Six in 10 Americans (61%) believe that religion can answer all or most of today's problems, while 17% disagree. Another 22% are undecided. The current figure, however, is far below the peak figure in 1957, when fully 81% said religion could answer the problems of the world.

Following is the trend:

Can Religion Answer Problems?

	Can Answer %	Out of date %	No opinion %
1989	61	17	22
1988	57	20	23
1986	57	23	20
1985	61	22	17
1984	56	21	23
1982	60	22	18
1981	65	15	20
1974	62	20	18
1957	81	7	12

Most inclined to believe that religion can answer today's problems are women, blacks, persons 50 and older, Southerners, and evangelicals.

Following is the question:

Do you believe that religion can answer all or most of today's problems, or that religion is largely old-fashioned and out of date?

The current findings are based on telephone interviews with 1,003 adults, 18 and older, conducted in scientifically selected localities across the nation during the period March 8-12. For results based on samples of this size, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects could be 4 percentage points in either direction.

In addition to sampling error, the reader should bear in mind that question wording and other practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

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